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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3267
RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC 8119
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5360
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 9212
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5252
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/PD FOR SWALKER, EAP/P, EAP/K
STATE PASS USDA ELECTRONICALLY FOR FAX/ITP SCHEIKH
STATE PASS USTR FOR RCASSIDY
USDOC FOR 4430/IEP/OPB/EAP/JDONIUS
TREASURY FOR OASIA/MGREWE
CINCPAC FOR J-74

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [ECON](#) [KS](#) [US](#) [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION IN SEOUL

Subject: Media Reaction; Seoul

East Asia and Pacific: North Korea

"Clinton Puts North Korea on the Spot"

Conservative Chosun Ilbo editorialized (02/16): "Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in a speech at the Asia Society in New York last weekend, said that if North Korea is genuinely prepared to completely and verifiably eliminate its nuclear programs, the U.S. would be willing to normalize bilateral ties, replace the Korean Peninsula's long-standing armistice agreement with a permanent peace treaty, and to extend economic aid for North Korean people. It was her first comprehensive statement on North Korea policy and comes ahead of her visit to the ROK this Thursday. Now that the Obama Administration has clearly stated its policy, the North must waste no more time trying to test the USG. It is now up to North Korean leader Kim Jong-il whether his country will be able to revive its battered economy and offer food and medicine to its citizens by doing what it has long agreed to do."

"Clinton's Candid Offer"

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo editorialized (02/16): "The North's tactics of preparing to launch a missile and renewing threats of military action against the ROK are mainly aimed at drawing Washington's attention to the Korean Peninsula. Clinton's comments are expected to help resolve the North's existing concerns, because she affirmed that the North Korean nuclear issue is the primary issue in the Obama Administration's diplomatic policy toward Asia, and she gave a strong signal that if North Korea is ready to end its nuclear ambitions, the U.S. would hold talks on carrying out measures to normalize bilateral relations. Accordingly, North Korea holds the key to the solution of the problem."

"It All Boils Down to Giving Up Nuclear Weapons"

Conservative Dong-a Ilbo editorialized (02/16): "We hope that Washington takes a clear position on some points. One of them refers to Secretary Clinton's statement, 'If North Korea is genuinely prepared to completely and verifiably eliminate its nuclear weapons program...' The phrase 'is prepared to eliminate' is starkly different from the words 'to dismantle,' which was used

by the Bush Administration. Secretary Clinton's comment indicates that even if North Korea does not actually remove its nuclear programs and is only 'prepared' to do so, the U.S. will take steps to improve relations with the North. This can be considered a more conciliatory approach to the North than during the Bush Administration. Of course, it is sometimes inevitable to employ conciliatory measures in order to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue peacefully. However, we have learned from experience that this attitude could cause the North to make a miscalculation and, consequently, make it more difficult for the communist state to dismantle its nuclear programs. This is evidenced by the fact that although the U.S. Republican Administration made a series of concessions over the past decade, even a nuclear verification regime was not adopted."

"Put the Comprehensive Approach on a Stable Track"

Left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun editorialized (02/17): "Secretary Clinton has made it clear that North Korea's nuclear disarmament, normalization of U.S.-North Korea ties, signing of a peace treaty and economic assistance to the North should be pursued simultaneously. It means that if the North's intention to denuclearize is confirmed, the U.S. would put all the things it has promised to offer on the negotiating table. This would be a departure from the former Bush Administration's 'denuclearization first policy' and a return to the basic spirit of the Joint Statement of September 19, 2005. Now it is time to create conditions for realizing comprehensive negotiations."

Stephens